

A DAY OF MISERY FOR WANDERERS

AT 3.02 on Saturday afternoon, groans of despair echoed around Loakes Park as Cheshunt's John Poole scored a shock early goal in the first round Amateur Cup tie with Wycombe Wanderers.

At 3.07 pm the groans grew louder when captain John Delaney was brought down by a Cheshunt opponent and writhed in agony on the turf.

He was carried off on a stretcher and his agony was only matched by the loyal 1,809 who came to see their side salvage dented prestige with the start of a cup run to Wembley.

Chances

But after the two early "disasters", all they saw was chance after chance go begging as the young and stubborn Herts side held tenaciously to their solitary goal lead.

The gloom became even thicker when the "news" spread that Delaney had broken his right leg and would be out for the season.

But fortunately, on this day of misery, Wycombe's players, officials and supporters were spared confirmation of the rumour and latest report is that

Delaney will be back on deck in a few weeks.

But will anyone bother to be there to see their fallen heroes?

"This is the last straw" one supporter said after the game and his sentiment seemed shared by all as the fans trekked out of the ground.

What a list of miserable memories they have suffered this season!

Striker

In the middle of the Isthmian League and a full 17 points behind leaders, Hendon; the loss of top striker Keith Searle to those very same rivals and now a humiliating home exit in the first round of the Amateur Cup and a near-serious injury to their captain.

Delaney himself blundered

in that second minute to allow Cheshunt the winning goal and Wycombe could have at least earned a replay if Mick Holifield had not been having a "nightmare" with his shooting boots.

Unguarded

The captain failed to clear a Cheshunt throw-in and John Poole guided the ball high into an unguarded net.

Five minutes later, John Hutchinson was on the field for Wycombe in place of Delaney and helped to create several opportunities for the home side.

Opportunities that all went astray, including one shot from Holifield which he controlled and hit from within 12 yards over the top of the bar.

Near half-time, Cheshunt moved well but Amos then brought the ball back upfield and Cheshunt goalie Dave O'Neill was required to make one of his many gallant saves.

Scramble

In the second half, Wycombe continued to prove they were a class above the Athenian Leaguers who relied on long clearing kicks at the back and "cross your fingers" chances in attack.

But goals are what count in cup ties.

As time ran on, the crowd would have settled for a replay but near the finish, were more likely to be served a double dose of defeat when a scramble near the Wycombe miraculously kept the ball off the line.